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means for printing at said respective incentive printing means a raincheck including said at least one purchasing incentive and said additional incentive in response to receipt of said raincheck information.

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-32 are pending; Claims 1, 9, 17, and 25 having been amended by way of the present amendment.

Claims 1-32 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Off et al (U.S. Pat. No. 5,612,868) in view of Fajkowski (U.S. Pat. No. 5,905,246).

Firstly, Applicant acknowledges with appreciation the courtesy of Examiner Lastra and primary Examiner Myher to conduct an interview on May 3, 2003 during which time the outstanding issues in the present case were discussed. During the interview, Applicant's representative pointed out that Fajkowski discloses that only a raincheck itself is provided to the customer.²

Thus, the processor of Fajkowski contrasts with the incentive processor of the present invention which can provide, in addition to a raincheck, additional coupons and/or purchasing incentives generated, according to the specification, to make up for any inconvenience to the customer associated with the product being out of stock.³ Changes were discussed during the interview which would clarify this feature in the independent claims. No agreement on

²Fajkowski, col. 20, line 35, to col. 36, line 25.

³Specification, page 9, line 19, to page 10, line 12.

patentability was reached pending further search and/or consideration. However, Examiner Lastra did indicate that such changes would distinguish over the two applied art references.

Given the understanding reached during the interview, Applicant submits herewith formally the changes discussed during the interview. Correspondingly, with no disclosure or suggestion in the applied prior art for generating additional incentives to compensate a customer for an item being out of stock and printing a raincheck including these incentives, it is respectfully submitted that independent Claims 1, 9, 17, and 25 and the claims dependent therefrom patentably define over the applied prior art.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment and in light of the above discussions, the Applicant submits that the claims are allowable. Therefore, an early and favorable action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Amended) A system for providing in-store printing of rainchecks for purchasing incentives associated with items subject to rainchecks, comprising:

an incentive processor for storing a plurality of purchasing incentives corresponding to a plurality of item identifiers for items subject to rainchecks;

at least one incentive printer;

a incentive processor bus coupling said incentive processor to said at least one incentive printer;

a point-of-sale (POS) controller;

at least one cash register; and

a POS bus coupling said POS controller, said at least one cash register, and said incentive processor;

wherein a respective cash register of said at least one cash register is configured to receive data defining an item identifier for an item that is subject to a raincheck;

one of said POS controller and said respective cash register is configured to transmit said data defining said item identifier for said item that is subject to said raincheck over said POS bus to said incentive processor;

said incentive processor is configured to generate raincheck information including at least one purchasing incentive in response to receipt of said data defining said item identifier for said item subject to said raincheck, said plurality purchasing incentives, and said plurality of item identifiers;

said at least one purchasing incentive comprising an additional incentive to compensate a customer for said item being out of stock;

said incentive processor is configured to transmit said raincheck information to a respective incentive printer of said at least one incentive printer over said incentive processor bus; and

said respective incentive printer is configured to print a raincheck including said at least one purchasing incentive and said additional incentive in response to receipt of said raincheck information received from said incentive processor.

9. (Amended) A process for providing in-store printing of rainchecks for purchasing incentives associated with items subject to rainchecks, comprising:

storing a plurality of purchasing incentives corresponding to a plurality of item identifiers for items subject to rainchecks via an incentive processor;

coupling said incentive processor to at least one incentive printer via an incentive processor bus;

coupling a point-of-sale (POS) controller, at least one cash register, and said incentive processor via a POS bus;

receiving at a respective cash register of said at least one cash register data defining an item identifier for an item that is subject to a raincheck;

transmitting from one of said POS controller and said respective cash register said data defining said item identifier for said item that is subject to said raincheck over said POS bus to said incentive processor;

generating at said incentive processor raincheck information including at least one purchasing incentive in response to receipt of said data defining said item identifier for said item subject to said raincheck, said plurality purchasing incentives, and said plurality of item identifiers, said at least one purchasing incentive comprising an additional incentive to compensate a customer for said item being out of stock;

transmitting from said incentive processor said raincheck information to a respective incentive printer of said at least one incentive printer over said incentive processor bus; and

printing at said respective incentive printer a raincheck including said at least one purchasing incentive and said additional incentive in response to receipt of said raincheck information received from said incentive processor.

17. (Amended) A computer program product comprising a computer storage medium having a computer program embedded in said computer storage medium for causing a computer to provide in-store printing of rainchecks for purchasing incentives associated with items subject to rainchecks, said computer program performing the steps of:

storing a plurality of purchasing incentives corresponding to a plurality of item identifiers for items subject to rainchecks via an incentive processor;

coupling said incentive processor to at least one incentive printer via an incentive processor bus;

coupling a point-of-sale (POS) controller, at least one cash register, and said incentive processor via a POS bus;

receiving at a respective cash register of said at least one cash register data defining an item identifier for an item that is subject to a raincheck;

transmitting from one of said POS controller and said respective cash register said data defining said item identifier for said item that is subject to said raincheck over said POS bus to said incentive processor;

generating at said incentive processor raincheck information including at least one purchasing incentive in response to receipt of said data defining said item identifier for said item subject to said raincheck, said plurality purchasing incentives, and said plurality of item identifiers, said at least one purchasing incentive comprising an additional incentive to compensate a customer for said item being out of stock;

transmitting from said incentive processor said raincheck information to a respective incentive printer of said at least one incentive printer over said incentive processor bus; and

printing at said respective incentive printer a raincheck including said at least one purchasing incentive and said additional incentive in response to receipt of said raincheck information received from said incentive processor.

25. (Amended) A system for providing in-store printing of rainchecks for purchasing incentives associated with items subject to rainchecks, comprising:

means for storing a plurality of purchasing incentives corresponding to a plurality of item identifiers for items subject to rainchecks;

means for coupling an incentive processing means to at least one incentive printing means;

means for coupling a point-of-sale (POS) controller means, at least one cash register means, and said incentive processing means;

means for receiving at a respective cash register means of said at least one cash register means data defining an item identifier for an item that is subject to a raincheck;

means for transmitting from one of said POS controller means and said respective cash register means said data defining said item identifier for said item that is subject to said raincheck to said incentive processing means;

means for generating raincheck information including at least one purchasing incentive in response to receipt of said data defining said item identifier for said item subject to said raincheck, said plurality purchasing incentives, and said plurality of item identifiers, said at least one purchasing incentive comprising an additional incentive to compensate a customer for said item being out of stock;

means for transmitting said raincheck information to a respective incentive printing means of said at least one incentive printing means; and

means for printing at said respective incentive printing means a raincheck including said at least one purchasing incentive and said additional incentive in response to receipt of said raincheck information.